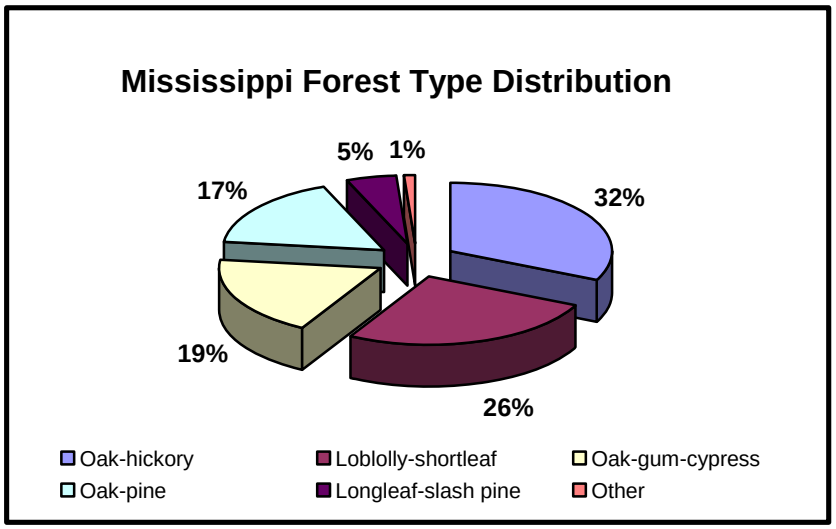
Mississippi

Forest Health Highlights

2008

The Resource

Mississippi's forests cover 19.9 million acres, more than 65% of the state's land area. Some 13.1 million acres of the states forested land is in non-industrial private ownership, while approximately 1.1 million acres are in national forests. Mississippi's forests are prized for their scenic beauty, supporting tourism and outdoor recreation and providing wildlife habitat throughout the state. Major forest types in the state include oak-hickory, loblolly and shortleaf pine, longleaf and slash pine, mixed oak-pine, and oak-gum-cypress.



Forest Influences and Programs

Southern pine beetle (SPB) has been Mississippi's most significant forest insect pest. Populations statewide have been very low for a number of years. In 2008, activity was again low, as was predicted from surveys of 26 counties during the

spring by the Mississippi Forestry Commission. A total of 29 spots were detected on private land in 13 counties; none of the counties were considered in epidemic status. Only three spots were detected on National Forests in Mississippi during the same time period. The state has developed a comprehensive SPB Prevention/Education Program to teach landowners about the benefits of thinning in reducing SPB hazard and improving forest health overall. In addition to the educational aspects of this program there is an associated cost-share component to assist in getting the thinning completed.

Pine engraver beetles (*Ips* spp.) activity declined in 2008, especially in areas affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita during 2005.

Early Detection Rapid Response trapping to detect the potentially invasive, exotic bark beetles was carried out in Mississippi in 2008. No new exotics were detected.

Sudden Oak Death surveys were conducted again in 2008 by pathologists from Mississippi State University and other federal agencies. The surveys focused on baiting water courses with susceptible leaves to detect the presence of the pathogen *(Phytophthora ramorum)* downstream from potential sources. If established in or outside of horticultural nurseries that have received potentially infected stock from shippers in California, the pathogen can show up in drainage water. A positive stream baiting was obtained in late 2007 outside a nursery in the Jackson area caused concern. Sampling continued during 2008. At present the pathogen is not considered to be established in the natural environment.

Cogon grass is a non-native, invasive plant that has been spreading aggressively in Mississippi in recent years. It takes over native grasses and vegetation and is a fire hazard under pine plantations. The severity and extent of infestations are increasing considerably in the disturbed forests following hurricane Katrina in 2005. The state has a Cogon Grass Task Force that is coordinating efforts to assist landowners and agencies with control/management of this species. On October 14, 2008 multiple agencies and groups signed an MOU concerning a newly enacted statewide Cooperative Weed Management Area.

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Forest Health Assistance in Mississippi

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